

For Discussion on
10 July 2009

Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs
Staff Deployment and Management of Public Swimming Pools

Purpose

This paper provides information on staff deployment and management of public swimming pools for Members' discussion.

Staff Deployment of Public Swimming Pools

2. At present, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) manages 37 public swimming pool complexes. To protect the safety of swimmers, we provide adequate number of lifeguards at each pool to perform lookout, patrol, lifesaving and first aid duties. In 2009, LCSD employs some 800 regular lifeguards as well as 850 seasonal lifeguards to provide services at the public swimming pools and bathing beaches, of which some 550 regular lifeguards as well as 600 seasonal lifeguards are deployed for swimming pools. While regular lifeguards are employed to provide services on a long-term basis, seasonal lifeguards are only recruited at the start of each swimming season to supplement the regular ones. In addition, cleansing staff are employed by cleansing contractors to carry out cleaning of the facilities including changing rooms and toilets in the swimming pool complex. Pool attendants are employed to control admissions at the entrance and crowd control within the swimming pool complex. Health ambassadors are also engaged on a part-time basis during the swimming season to give advice to swimmers to pay attention on personal hygiene while swimming and to advise them to leave the pool if they are not feeling well.

Level of provision of lifeguards

3. LCSD has made reference to practices of overseas countries in determining the number of lifeguards for manning individual pool facilities within a swimming pool complex. As the level of lifeguard provision varies from country to country, there is no universal standard to follow. A Working Group on Review of Lifeguards for Public

Swimming Pools and Bathing Beaches (the Working Group) was formed in 2004 to review the provision of lifeguards at all public swimming venues. The Working Group consisted of representatives of the Hong Kong Life Saving Society (HKLSS) and staff members of LCSD including the lifeguards working at the swimming pools and bathing beaches. As part of the review, the Working Group members conducted site visits to individual swimming pools and beaches, seeking views from the lifeguards on the appropriate level of manpower provision.

4. Based on the findings of the review, we adopt the following principles in determining the level of provisions of lifeguards:

- For non-peak swimming season, i.e. April, May, September and October each year, a standard provision of lifeguards is provided for these months at each swimming pool. The number of lifeguards is increased during the peak swimming season, i.e. from June to August, to cater for the higher demand arising from higher pool attendance.
- Lookout and/or patrol posts are designated at each type of swimming pool facilities including 50-metre main pool, 50-metre secondary pool, diving pool, teaching/training pool, children's pool, paddling pool and leisure pool. Each post at these pools must be filled by lifeguards during the opening hours of swimming pools.
- First-aid post(s) is designated at each swimming pool complex, which must be filled by lifeguards during the opening hours of swimming pools.
- Additional lifeguards are deployed if the swimming pools are deeper or wider in dimensions
- Additional lifeguards are deployed to ensure that all locations within a pool can be watched.
- Review on the lifeguard provision is conducted on annual basis taking into account any changes of the pool design or user pattern. Adjustment of provision will be made to meet the changes in operational needs. For instance, during the period of Free Admission Scheme implemented by LCSD from 1 July to 30 September 2008, each swimming pool was provided with 2 to 3 additional lifeguards to cope with the increase in pool attendance.

Qualification and Training of Lifeguards

5. To ensure the professional competence of all LCSD lifeguards recruited on regular and seasonal basis, their lifesaving qualification requirement has been raised from Bronze Medallion Award to Pool Lifeguard Award since 2003. The lifeguard qualification has to be re-validated once every three years to ensure that all lifeguards are in possession of updated lifesaving skills and knowledge. LCSD provides regular trainings to upkeep the knowledge and skills of the regular lifeguards. Training is also provided for newly recruited seasonal lifeguards. Moreover, all lifeguards, including seasonal lifeguards, are required to conduct mobilization drills on a regular basis at swimming pools to ensure that lifeguards are familiar with the rescue operation.

Management of Public Swimming Pools

6. Each swimming pool complex (except the two contracted out) is managed and headed by a staff member of the Amenities Assistant Grade at each shift, supervising the duties of the senior lifeguards and lifeguards. At the higher level, each pool is under the supervision of the Leisure Services Managers at various ranks at the relevant District Leisure Services Office. Detailed operational guidelines on the management of public swimming pools have been drawn up to facilitate the relevant staff to manage the pools effectively and efficiently.

Advice Sought

7. Members are invited to note and discuss the information set out in this paper.

Leisure and Cultural Services Department
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